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TOURISTS' GUIDE

TO THE

GREAT FALLS

OF THE

POTOMAC,

VIA THE

CHESAPEAKE & OHIO CANAL.

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REMINISCENCES:

BY HENRY C.<sup>L</sup> DAILEY.

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WASHINGTON, D. C.

GIBSON BROTHERS, PRINTERS.

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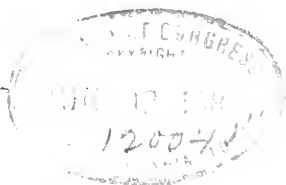
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## INTRODUCTION.

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MY DEAR SIR:

I thank you for copy of "Great Falls of the Potomac—Reminiscences," and congratulate you upon being the first to introduce this subject: for, in my opinion, there is scarcely any other locality of its kind in our country presenting such wild and varied scenery, or a region more worthy to be made famous as a place of resort.

The Chesapeake and Ohio Canal, the marvelously constructed Cabin John Bridge—

"A bow in stone that spans the stream,  
As light and airy as a dream"—

the Great Falls of the Potomac, the grand river itself, winding through this mountain region—all taken together, combine so many objects of interest, and are so enchanting in their general characteristics as to be almost, if not quite, unequalled in point of attraction by any other known excursion of equal extent—that is, from Washington to Great Falls, a distance of about fifteen miles. Tourists preferring more ex-

tended limits, cross the Atlantic, travel thousands of miles, visit the Italian and Swiss lakes, mountains, &c., and return, having seen scarcely anything more beautiful than the interesting and varied objects and scenery presented during the progress of this little excursion to the Great Falls of the Potomac, especially if taken *via* the C. & O. canal.

To one who has many times enjoyed this charming trip, it seems strange that so many of the numerous visitors to Washington omit this, one of the most enjoyable of the many attractive excursions to be made in the vicinity of this beautiful city.

Therefore, let me congratulate you, as being, I believe, the first to call attention to this fascinating region in the way of poetic description.

Very truly,

DAVID S. TURNER.

TO HENRY C. DAILEY, Esq.

APRIL 30, 1884.

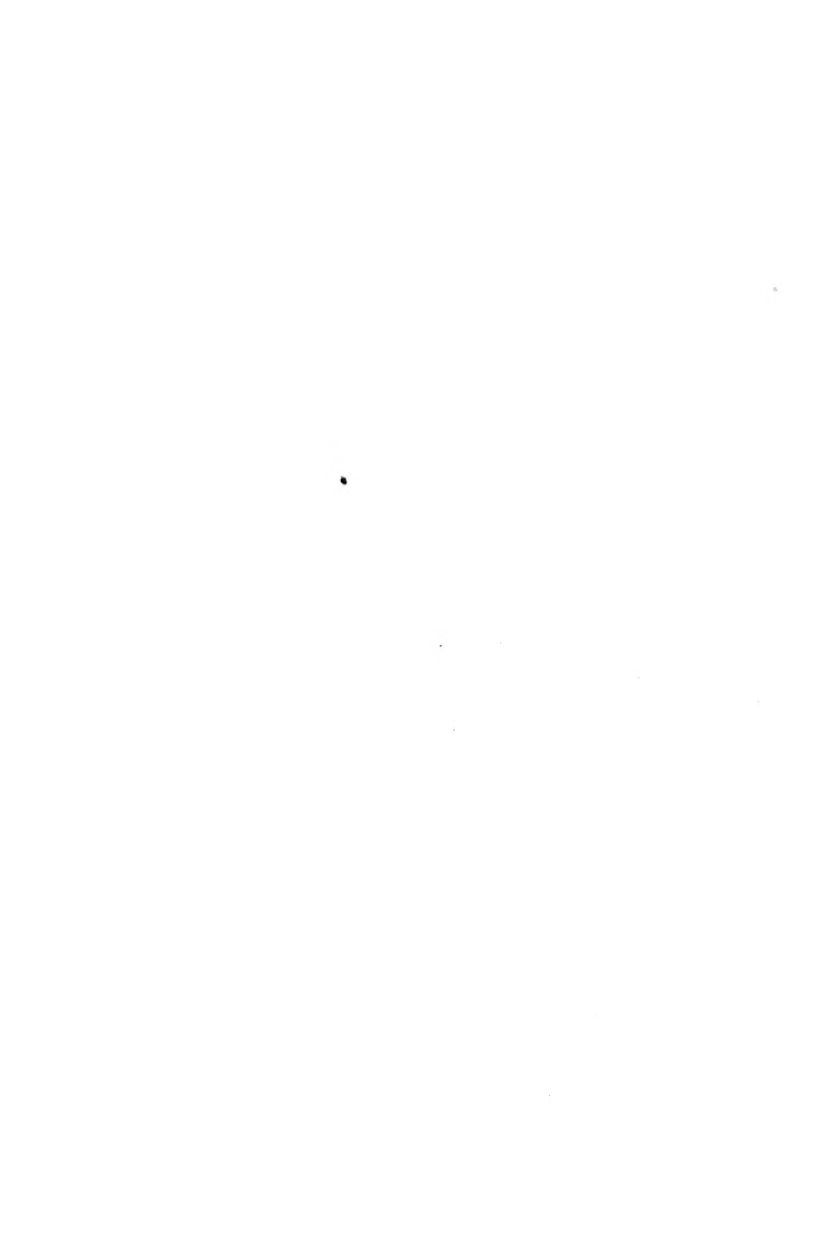


Col. DAVID S. TURNER.

MY DEAR SIR: From one who has widely traveled and seen much of the world, and who returns to us with a language gently tinged with the pleasing accent of foreign tongues, and with garments still fragrant with the perfumes of other lands, the introduction which you have given me is fully appreciated for its spirit of intelligence, as well as for the compliment paid to the author of the "poetic description."

Most respectfully,

H. C. DAILEY.



# GREAT FALLS OF THE POTOMAC.

REMINISCENCES.

BY HENRY C. DAILEY.

Fair Venice, rising from the sea,  
In proud and stately majesty,  
May boast her broad canals that lave  
Her marble walls with reflux wave,  
Where every bridge and court has long  
Been famous in romance and song;  
But could these floods their toils forego,  
And in one stream continuous flow,  
Then might great Venice well essay,  
Potomac's matchless water-way.

A barge, the channel's comely bride,  
Is launched upon the restless tide,  
And through the water-course she speeds,  
Like Neptune's car with panting steeds.

Her living freight, a precious few,  
Compose a bright and happy crew,  
Who for the love of vernal hours,  
Range Nature's garden-walks and bowers,  
To breathe sweet airs all heavenly pure,  
Where earth's bright emerald fields allure,  
And forests proud are revelling  
In garments redolent of spring,  
That stretch along the river side,  
And spread far back, diversified  
With trees whose spotless blossoms show,  
Like bridal veils, as white as snow.

Here distant views delight the eye,  
Through lenses\* drawing objects nigh,  
While shifting slopes of varied green,  
Present a panoramic scene.

Gray walls of rock rise on the view,  
In palisades and wonders new,  
Whose brow is streaked with graven lines,  
O'ercast with shrubs and dangling vines.

---

\* The tourist will find pleasure in the use of a pair of good field-glasses.

A fissure shows an earth-stained wall,  
Where leaps a dashing water-fall,  
Essaying with a frisky flow,  
The pool where water lilies grow.

Now roving bees hum o'er the field,  
Where flowers a fragrant nectar yield,  
And toiling rustics freely ply  
The peaceful arts of husbandry.

The voyagers pursue their way,  
Enchanted by the blooming May,  
While Jove,\* who loves the vernal flower,  
Falls gently in a genial shower;  
And earth's fresh verdure, pure of stain,  
Receives the bath of dropping rain,  
While thickly on the woody banks,  
On grass, and reeds in tangled ranks,  
Bright raindrops, into jewels run,  
There roll and sparkle in the sun.

---

\* Jove—The poet Prior, speaking of Venus, says—

“Jove shall again revere your power,  
And rise a swan or fall a shower.”

Gondola-like, the craft would rise,  
And dart beneath a "bridge of size,"  
When all, with Turkish bow and port,  
Make their salam with mirthful sport;  
The boat e'en showed true courtesy,  
And dropped her snowy canopy,  
Then shot along past field and wood,  
Above Potomac's turbid flood;  
And gazing down the woody steep,  
Upon the dark and sullen deep,  
Behold a wild extended shore,  
With blooming forests hanging o'er,  
That mantle with a solemn shade,  
The river's marge in emerald laid.

Here Flora breathes upon the air,  
And beams in beauty everywhere.  
The flowering dog-wood, clothed in white,  
Is far and near, a pleasing sight.  
The red-bud waves its purple head,  
With long and slender branches spread.  
Here fringe-trees hang their veils of snow,  
Or rushes bend where willows grow.  
Sweet vernal-grass and downy sedge,  
And beard-tongue with its prickly edge,

And violets yellow, pale, and blue,  
The rambler passes in review.  
Fair little bluets strew the ground,  
With moss-pinks and oxalis found ;  
The ox-eyed daisy shows its face,  
With butter-cups of charming grace ;  
The dandelion, too, bright thing !  
The golden harbinger of spring.  
The honeysuckle, Flora's lyre,  
Glow's here and there with rosy fire.  
Wild columbine, in scarlet dressed,  
And Venus' pride with purple vest,  
Adorn some nook or lonely vale,  
Where forest perfumes scent the gale.

Here Nature shrugs her shoulders high,  
Whose tortured features lure the eye,  
Inviting Flora's votary band  
O'er summit bold and dimpled land.

A vista,\* through a small ravine,  
With sylvan slopes, a brook between,

---

\*Vista—through which there is a view of the arch of Cabin John Bridge from the canal.

Entreats the ravished eye awhile  
To wander through this leafy aisle.

Here rises, lofty and sublime,  
The mighty arch,\* defying time,  
In size and grandeur peerless, vast,  
A famous wonder unsurpassed.  
A bow in stone that spans the stream,  
As light and airy as a dream ;  
Whose vaulted heights and traversed plain  
A city's aqueduct sustain.

Here Echo's mimic voice is heard,  
With tone and cadence of each word ;  
And loud the lofty arch resounds  
Beneath that ceiling's massive bounds ;  
The mocking nymph each shout renews  
To guests repeating last adieus.

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\*The architect, Maj.-Gen'l M. C. Meigs, U. S. A., furnishes the following note :

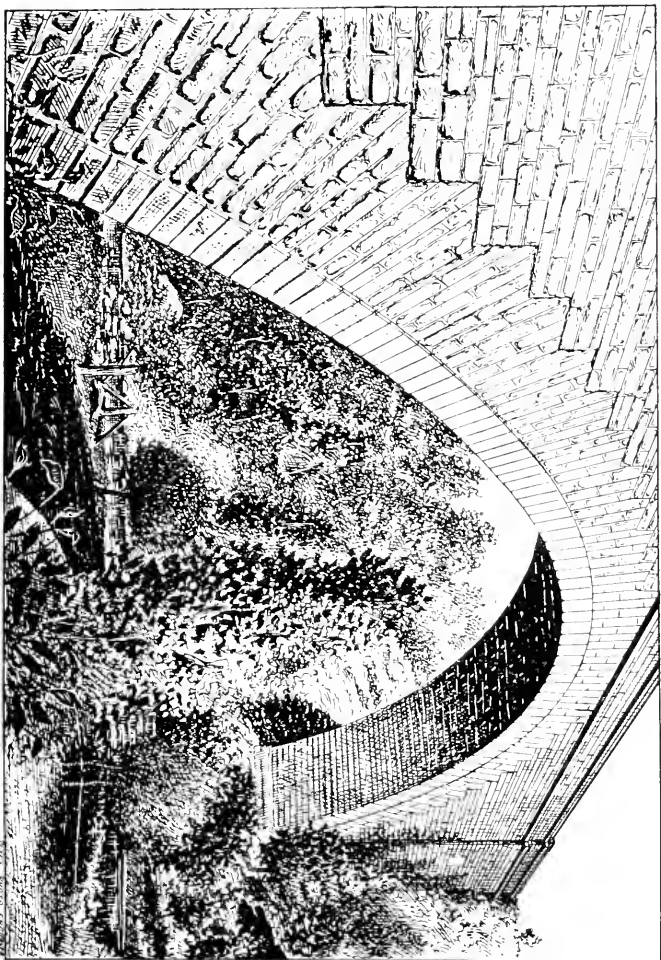
"This bridge carries the Washington Aqueduct across the valley of Cabin John Creek. The granite arch of 220 feet clear span, is the longest stone arch now existing in the world. The height is 104 feet above the bottom of the gorge which it spans.

"M. C. MEIGS."



J. A. COLL, PHOTOGRAPHER.

CABIN JOHN BRIDGE.



1895



And hither florists gladly turn  
To see the famous walking-fern,\*  
Whose striding leaves and curving stalk  
Seem stepping in a graceful walk.

From maid who threads the rural lane  
The four-leaved clover hides in vain;  
She twines the little souvenir  
With pretty wild flowers plundered here.

Each glen and grove and frowning height  
Gives promise of some wilder sight.

We stood upon a craggy pile†  
That towered above the rocky isle,  
And saw the rapid waters leap,  
Loud roaring to the yawning deep.

Within rock-crevices there grew  
Bright little flowerets, pink and blue,

---

\* Walking Fern. --Professor L. F. Ward says that "the botanist celebrates this stream--Cabin John Creek--more for its Walking Fern than for the world-renowned arch that spans it."

Distance from Georgetown to Cabin John Bridge by Aqueduct road, 8 miles; by way of Canal, 7 miles; to Great Falls, 15 miles. There are 16 locks on the Canal between Georgetown and Great Falls.

† Craggy pile. --Conn's Island overlooking the Falls.

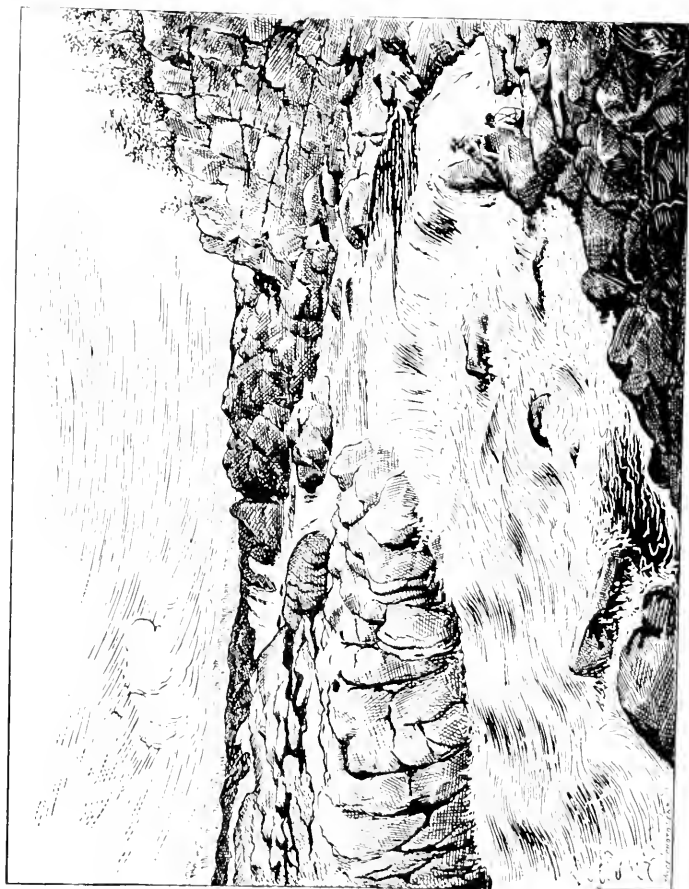
So high they even seemed to mock  
The boldness of the gray old rock.

Here grasses, shrubs, and ferns have room,  
And creepers start where berries bloom.

A scene of grandeur we surveyed,  
Where rocks in mighty heaps are laid.  
Huge boulders held in Nature's vise,  
Rough cones and jagged reefs of gneiss,  
Tremendous blocks together massed,  
Thrown up magnificently vast—  
Pyramidal in ruins stand,  
Colossal and supremely grand ;  
Confusion wild, that justly seems  
But one of Nature's awful dreams !

A story of the rocks she tells  
In many wondrous little wells.  
But some are cisterns filled with earth,  
Dwarfed homes of many a floweret's birth ;  
And some are like huge auger holes,  
Bored deep and set as drinking bowls,  
That rural elves may sip, or shower  
Pure cups to spray the thirsty flower.





GREAT FALLS OF THE POTOMAC.

J. A. COLE, PHOTOGRAPHER.

When some high flood has seethed and roared,  
And through this rocky region poured,  
'Tis whispered, that the river-god  
Stood here, with diamond-pointed rod,  
And stirred the pebbles round and round,  
Like millstones whirled that smoothly ground,  
Until his toiling arm found rest  
In waning power and falling crest;  
Then shaking out his dripping locks,  
He sank to lave his native rocks,  
And left each cell a floral vase  
To please the genius of the place.

How grand and weird are those Great Falls!\*

---

\* On the Virginia side of Great Falls is an old and disused canal-way built of hewn Seneca stone, constructed under the supervision of General Washington, and at a cost of over three millions of dollars, through which formerly loaded barges were floated down around the Falls into the open river below. It is said that on a clear still night the roar of the Falls may be heard as far as eight miles back in Virginia.

NOTE.—There exists a legend that General Washington once threw a silver dollar across the river at Great Falls. This tradition reminds us of the story of the venerable African who said that he “knew great Washington, and when the General walked in his regimentals, his sword dragged on the ground as big as a young sapling.” He also “knew the Potomac when it was a small branch.”

The solid base of ruined walls—  
The wreck of mountain barricade,  
Or riven hills that glaciers made,  
That in the vanished ages rose,  
A rocky ridge that could oppose  
The pent up river, which at length  
Burst through the rift with crushing strength,  
And left these remnants of defense,  
The waters' fretting monuments;  
For Nature's temper here is shown,  
Still battling for her ancient throne.

When spring melts down the mountain snow,  
And deluged valleys overflow,  
Then rage the floods from shore to shore,  
That swirl with an appalling roar,  
Upheaved and tossing in the air,  
With drift-wood leaping here and there,  
When every water-pocket whirls  
A pestle, grinding as it twirls,  
That shapes those cells upon the crown  
Of massive rocks that highest frown.



In this wild spot\* where boulders gray  
Impede the foot-path's rugged way,  
A scene among the crags near by  
Allured and held the roving eye.

Within a little shaded nook  
That bloomy bush and shrub o'erlook,  
Assembled in a happy group,  
Was lodged a rambling, comely troop,  
With napkins spread in colors gay,  
On earth, and rock, in bright array,  
Where all, as in a picture cast,  
Make merry o'er the rare repast.  
The wild bird peeped upon the scene,  
And piped through mazy copses green.  
With cheerful looks their spirits rise,  
And bear the soul to lips and eyes.  
Mild airs with fragrant odors wed,  
Here health regaling incense shed,  
That glads the pilgrim resting here,  
And aids the noontide banquet's cheer.

Let those who would this region see,

---

\*Tourists Visiting Conn's Island frequently observe such little picnic scenes among the grass-grown craggy nooks.

And roam through Nature's gallery,  
Come when the woods in bloom appear,  
In May,\* the loveliest of the year;  
When o'er earth's bosom Flora strews  
Her countless flowers of varied hues,  
When high the saffron-tulip grows,  
And modest peers the sweet wild rose,  
And tree tops breathe soft murmurings  
Like harp-notes, while the mavis sings.

So can the stranger aptly say,  
Wayfarers hither love to stray,  
As to some classic spot renowned,  
And long revered as storied ground,  
That gave to sapient minds of yore,  
Great themes in legendary lore.

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\*Every month of summer and autumn also presents its distinctive features of beauty and variety in tone and color along the river to Great Falls.

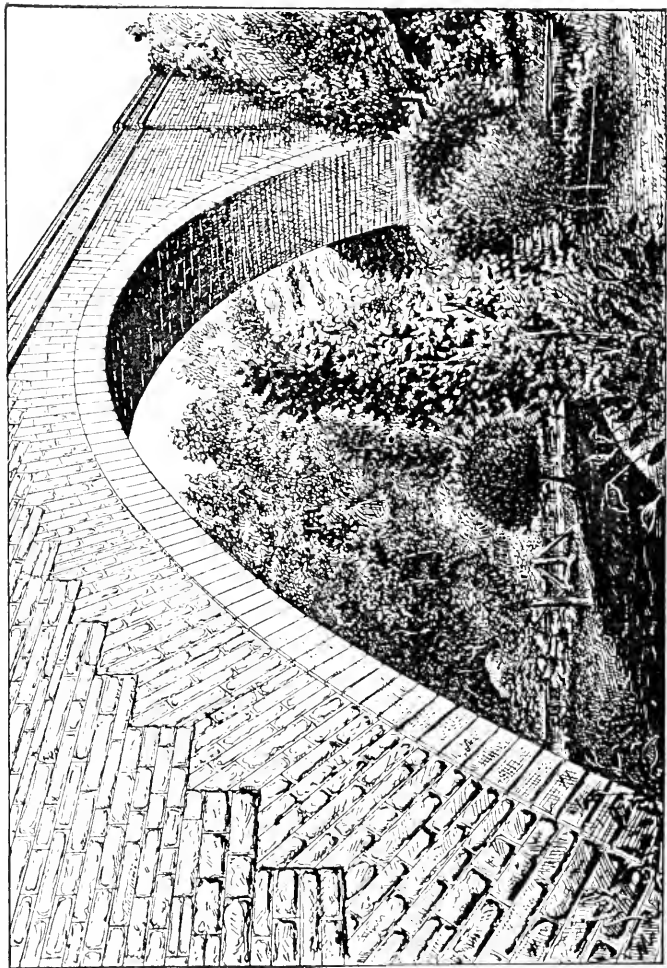
NOTE.—An Alpine-stock will assist one in climbing among the rocks.

❧ EVERY VISITOR SHOULD PROCURE THE TOURISTS' GUIDE TO GREAT FALLS OF THE POTOMAC AS A SOUVENIR.



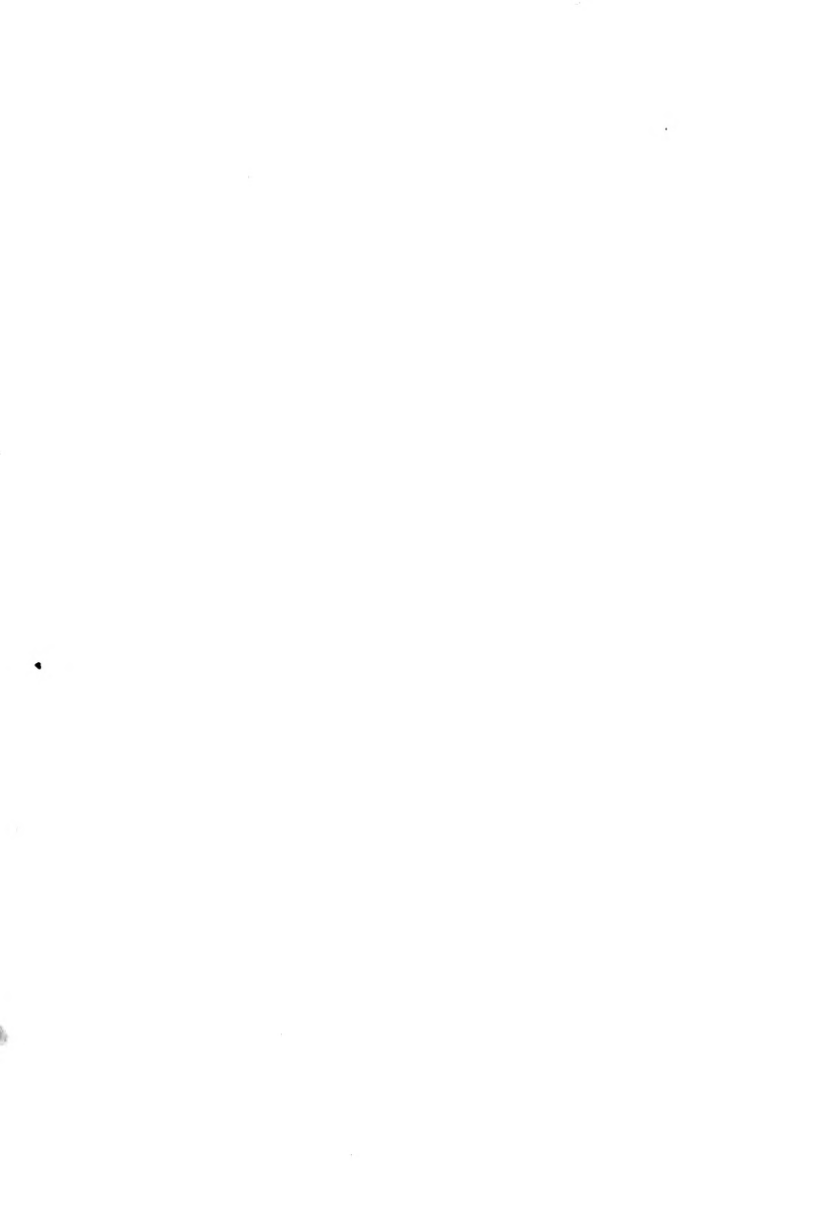






CABIN JOHN BRIDGE.

J. A. COLE, PHOTOGRAPHER.



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